

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 201424Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1528
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMCONSUL GOTEBERG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HELSINKI 1277

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FI
SUBJECT: ISSUE OF EXCEPTIONAL LAW TO EXTEND PRESIDENT KEKKONEN IN
OFFICE WITHOUT ELECTIONS AGAIN BEING DISCUSSED

REF: (A) HELSINKI 1271, (B) HELSINKI 0334, (C) HELSINKI 0497

1. SUMMARY: EXCEPTIONAL LAW TO BYPASS PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTIONS BY EXTENDING KEKKONEN IN OFFICE ONCE AGAIN A
TOPICAL ISSUE. CONSERVATIVE PARTY SOURCES INDICATE PARTY
HAS BEEN APPROACHED BY GOVERNMENT PARTIES TO SUPPORT SUCH
SPECIAL LAW. CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERSHIP HAS EXPRESSED
ITS WILLINGNESS--AT A PRICE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN
WHETHER CURRENT OBSTACLES TO SPECIAL LAW CAN BE OVERCOME,
A POSSIBILITY THAT SHOULD NOT BE DISCOUNTED. END SUMMARY.

2. AT CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONVENTION IN TURKU JUNE 10-12,
CONSERVATIVE LEADERS TOLD POLCOUNS THEY HAVE BEEN
APPROACHED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
PARTY (SDP) AND CENTER PARTY TO SUPPORT AN INITIATIVE FOR
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AN EXCEPTIONAL LAW TO EXTEND PRESIDENT KEKKONEN IN
OFFICE WITHOUT ELECTIONS. CONSERVATIVE OFFICIALS SAID
THEY DID NOT REJECT IDEA OUT OF HAND; INSTEAD THEY
LINKED CONSERVATIVE PARTY SUPPORT FOR SUCH INITIATIVE
TO PRIOR HOLDING OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, A CONDITION
WHICH SDP AND CENTER PARTY REJECTED, ACCORDING TO
CONSERVATIVE OFFICIALS. ON JUNE 17, CONSERVATIVE-ORIENTED

NEWSPAPER UUSI SUOMI REPORTED THAT SDP AND CENTER PARTY ARE HOPING THAT CONSERVATIVE PARTY WILL PRESENT INITIATIVE FOR RE-ELECTION OF KEKKONEN BY EXCEPTIONAL LAW, WHICH INITIATIVE SDP, COMMUNIST-FRONT SKDL AND CENTER PARTY WILLING TO SUPPORT.

3. LATEST ROUND OF INTEREST IN EXCEPTIONAL LAW BEGAN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EMERGENCE OF FIVE PARTY MAJORITY GOVERNMENT LAST MONTH. IT BELIEVED AMONG SOME PLITICAL CIRCLES THAT ATMOSPHERE FOR GETTING EXCEPTIONAL LAW THROUGH THE PARLIAMENT BETTER WITH CURRENT MAJORITY GOVERNMENT THAN IT WAS LAST JANUARY WHEN SIMILAR EFFORT ABORTED (REFTEL B). ESSENTIALLY SAME REASONS FOR EXCEPTIONAL LAW BEING CITED NOW AS LAST WINTER, I.E. RESULT OF ELECTION IS FOREGONE CONCLUSION; WITH NO "LEGITIMATE" OPPOSITION, ELECTIONS WOULD BE A FARCE; RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST CANDIDATES WILL BE EMBARRASMENT TO FINNISH/SOVIET RELATIONS; LOW VOTER TURNOUT WILL BE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO PRESIDENT KEKKONEN; AND INDIVIDUAL PARTIES FEAR THEY WILL NOT FARE WELL IN COMPETITION WITH OTHER PRO-KEKKONEN PARTIES IN ELECTING ELECTORS. ONE ADDITIONAL REASON BEING MENTIONED CURRENTLY IS SDP EMBARRASSMENT OVER CANDIDACY OF AHTI SALONEN (REFTEL C) WHO WAS NOMINAL MEMBER OF SDP UNTIL HE WAS EXPELLED IN MAY AFTER ACCEPTING CONSTITUTIONALIST PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CONFIDENTIAL

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NOMINATION.

4. KEY TO EXCEPTIONAL LAW'S CHANCES IS STILL CONSERVATIVE PARTY. OPPOSITION TO IDEA OF EXCEPTIONAL LAW AMONG CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LAST JAN-FEB WAS DECISIVE IN FAILURE OF INITIATIVE AT THAT TIME (OPPOSITION OF SWEDISH PARTY AND CHRISTIAN LEAGUE MP'S ALSO IMPORTANT LAST WINTER, BUT NOT DECISIVE). HOWEVER, CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERSHIP LAST WINTER DID NOT EXERT PRESSURE ON ITS MP'S TO SUPPORT EXCEPTIONAL LAW. SAME LEADERSHIP IS NOW SAYING PRIVATELY THAT IF PRICE IS RIGHT, E.E. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS CALLED, THEY PREPARED TO SUPPORT EXCEPTIONAL LAW; THEY BELIEVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WOULD GAIN STRONGLY IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, BECOMING CLEARLY THE SECOND LARGEST PARTY IN PARLIAMENT, AND, THUS BE ABLE VIRTUALLY TO INSIST ON ITS PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT UNDER THREAT OF TYING-UP PARLIAMENT WITH ITS LARGE REPRESENTATION.

5. BECAUSE OF PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES FOR CONSERVATIVES FLOWING FROM PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, PARTY LEADERSHIP APPARENTLY WILLING RUN RISK THAT SUPPORT FOR EXCEPTIONAL

LAW MAY SPLIT SO-CALLED RIGHT-WING OR UNRECONSTRUCTED
KEKKONEN OPPONENTS OFF FROM PARTY. HOWEVER, THIS
GROUP IS ALREADY CONSIDERABLY REDUCED IN NUMBER AND
INFLUENCE AND ON THE DEFENSIVE IN CONSERVATIVE PARTY
LEADERSHIP'S APPARENTLY INCREASINGLY SUCCESSFUL
DRIVE TO IMPOSE PARTY'S VOTE APPEAL AND ITS THUS FAR
LESS SUCCESSFUL BUT EQUALLY UNRELENTING DRIVE TO OBTAIN
COM-
PLETE ACCEPTANCE BY PRESIDENT KEKKONEN AND RIVAL
POLITICAL PARTIES. IT SEEMS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT CONCERTED
EFFORT BY CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP TO WHIP RECALCITRANT
MP'S INTO LINE BEHIND EXCEPTIONAL LAW WOULD BE SUFFICI-
ENTLY SUCCESSFUL TO ASSURE LAW'S APPROVAL. (OPPOSITION
OF ONE/SIXTH OF MP'S VOTING IS NECESSARY TO BLOCK
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APPROVAL OF AN EXCEPTIONAL LAW, I.E. 34 NEGATIVE VOTES,
IF ALL 200 MP'S PRESENT AND VOTING.)

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INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 HELSINKI 1277

6. MATTI VIRKKUNEN, THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WHO RAN AGAINST PRESIDENT KEKKONEN IN 1968 (LAST TIME PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS HELD IN FINLAND) TOLD CHARGE HE DOUBTS VERY MUCH CONSERVATIVE PARTY WOULD AGREE TO TAKE INITIATIVE TO PUT FORWARD EXCEPTIONAL LAW PROPOSAL (AS SDP AND CENTER PARTY APPARENTLY WISH, ACCORDING TO UUSI SUOMI ARTICLE). AT SAME TIME IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT GOVERNMENT PARTIES WILL ACCEDE TO CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP DEMAND FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AS CONDITION OF ITS SUPPORT FOR EXCEPTIONAL LAW; PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SUPPORT CONSERVATIVE BELIEF PARTY WOULD REALIZE IMPORTANT GAINS IF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WERE HELD SOON. THUS, AT THIS TIME THERE APPEAR TO BE SERIOUS OBSTACLES TO A DECISION TO GO TO AN EXCEPTIONAL LAW.

7. HOWEVER, GIVEN CURRENT MOOD OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERSHIP AND ITS OVERRIDING PREOCCUPATION WITH OBTAINING KEKKONEN ACCEPTANCE, QUESTION REMAINS WHETHER PARTY LEADERSHIP IN ITS EAGERNESS COULD BE INDUCED TO

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SUPPORT EXCEPTIONAL LAW EVEN WITHOUT OBTAINING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. NOW THAT CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERS HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THEIR SUPPORT FOR EXCEPTIONAL LAW IS AVAILABLE AT A PRICE, THEY MAY FIND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO CONTROL THE FINAL PRICE. WHILE NO FORMAL ACTION CAN BE TAKEN ON AN EXCEPTIONAL LAW UNTIL PARLIAMENT RECONVENES IN SEPTEMBER, THERE MOST LIKELY WILL BE FURTHER POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS AND SPECULATION CONCERNING THIS QUESTION DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS. HOUSTON

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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